



## A Study on College Students' Viewing Behaviors on Stars' Reality Shows

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### Abstract

In this study, a questionnaire survey of college students' viewing behaviors on reality shows of star has been conducted. The study shows that, (a) Female college students are the important audiences for the stars' reality shows. (b) While the college students show a mediocre appraisal on the domestic reality shows of star, they are more inclined to watch the domestic programs, holding that the overall level of the domestic reality shows of stars continues to improve. (c) In the initial contact, the popularity of the program is the primary factor in attracting college students to watch, but the star line-up is the important focus of a sustainable viewership. (d) Mobile media have become the main terminal of viewing and interaction for college students currently.

**Key words:** College student; Stars' reality show; Viewing behavior

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### INTRODUCTION

Reality show (also known as reality television, TV reality), normally refers to a television entertainment program in which ordinary people (not actors in the program) as the

main participants complete a goal or show their real living conditions in a specific scene in a long period under the game rule (Han & Zheng, 2005, p.102). A reality show of star refers to a reality show whose main participants are stars, such as movie stars, sport stars and singing stars, etc. The charm of the stars, the content and characteristics which the stars should experience in the program and the man-made situations for the stars, determine the success of the dissemination result of the reality show of star (Liu & Li, 2014).

Some researchers believe that, in the domestic reality shows, "Sudden Emergence" in 2012, "Splendid Sights" in 2013 and "Continue Glory" in 2014 have become the backbones to lead the viewing consumption habits of Chinese people. They are even considered to be a universal social and cultural phenomenon, and to some extent alleviate the general anxiety of Chinese people in the social transition period (Chang, 2014, January 17). Some researchers also analyze the contents of the children's reality shows and find that some children's reality shows are purely in pursuit of commercial interests, take young age and thrill as the selling points, seriously affect the physical and mental health of children (Wang, 2014). Li Qun's study, however, based on the perspective of consumerism, discusses the production and consumption of the stars' reality shows from the dimensions of star construction, star image building and star consumption, etc. (Li, 2013).

By surveying college students' viewing habits of stars' reality shows, this study hopes to know the daily entertainments and aesthetic tastes of college students; understand the main audiences in college students for the stars' reality shows; analyze the successes and shortcomings of the domestic stars' reality shows, and provide some references for the production and progress of the domestic stars' reality shows.

## 1. STUDY METHODS

The study has designed the questionnaire of “College Students’ Satisfaction on Stars’ Reality Shows”. The questionnaire is in a closed form to fill in for about 8-10 minutes. A total of 90 copies have been distributed, and the surveyed students are from Southwest University and Chongqing Youth Vocational and Technical College. The questionnaire distribution channels are QQ, Wechat, Microblog and other social communicative tools, and are through other social websites; the questionnaire distribution and collection spent three weeks, and a total of 74 questionnaires have been collected, with a collection rate of 82.2%. Excluding those incomplete and invalid questionnaires, the valid questionnaires for statistics in this study are 62. The questionnaires have met the following conditions: a) should be undergraduates; b) the participant or his family members does not work in a TV station; c) the participant should stay on campus for five days a week or more than five days.

## 2. STATISTICS AND ANALYSIS

During the distribution of the questionnaires, excluding those questionnaire samples which do not meet the requirements, the final number of valid questionnaires is 62.

A total of 38 male students are in the sample, accounting for 61% of the total respondents. 24 are female students, accounting for 39% of the total.

The students of arts are 21, accounted for 34% of the total respondents. The students of science and engineering are 41, accounting for 66%.

There are 29 first-year university students in the investigation, accounting for 47% of the total respondents. 30 sophomores, accounting for 48% of the total. 2 juniors and 1 senior respectively, jointly accounting for 5% of the total.

### 2.1 The Analysis on the Audience and Viewing Frequency of Stars’ Reality Shows

The valid questionnaires show that among the 38 male respondents, 13 watched the starts’ reality shows every week, accounting for 34.2% of the total; 25 people hardly watched reality shows, accounting for 65.8% of the total. In the 24 female respondents, 15 watched reality shows regularly every week, accounting for 62% of the total. Among them, 6 people watched 3-5 times a week, and 9 people did not watch stars’ reality shows regularly every week.

For the 6 stars’ reality shows which are often broadcasted, among the 38 male respondents, only 7 selected 3 or more than 3 shows to watch on a frequent basis, accounting for 18% of the total; while among the 24 female respondents, 13 selected 3 or more than 3 shows to watch on a frequent basis, accounting for 54% of the total.

**Table 1**  
**College Students’ Viewing Frequency of the Reality Shows**

Frequency	Number of people	Percentage
Female students who watch every week	15	24.19%
Female students who hardly watch	9	14.52%
Male students who watch every week	13	20.97%
Male students who hardly watch	25	40.32%
Total	62	100.00%

Female students have plenty of time, walk in the forefront of fashion information, and are easily attracted by celebrities and entertainment gossips. The good-looking scenes in the shows, seductive stars, fashionable apparels and other elements can be impetuses for them to watch. Most stars’ reality shows are on a regular basis, have a consistent “plot”, and will attract female college students to continue to watch.

Male Students are not so interested in stars and entertainment gossips, and are not easy to be attracted by the plots of reality shows. Therefore, only a handful of male college students watch the stars’ reality shows regularly every week.

The survey shows that college students have not been widely attracted by the stars’ reality shows, and the audience group is mainly girls. Compared to male respondents, female respondents have a higher viewing frequency on stars’ reality shows, in a wider range of variety. They consist of the key audiences of stars’ reality shows.

### 2.2 The Analysis on the Audiences’ Viewing Preferences of Stars’ Reality Shows

#### 2.2.1 The Most Important Concern

When the 62 surveyed people chose their concerns on the stars’ reality shows, 22 of them selected star lineup, accounting for 35% of the total; 21 selected program chain, accounting for 34%; 11 selected popularity and social repercussion, accounting for 18%; 8 chose production team, accounting for 13%. The survey shows that college students of concern most of star lineup and program chain design of stars’ reality shows.

**Table 2**  
**The Most Important Concerns of College Students’ on Stars’ Reality Shows**

Item	Number of people	Percentage
Star line-up	22	35.48%
Program chain	21	33.87%
Production team	8	12.90%
Popularity and social repercussion	11	17.74%
Total	62	100.00%

### 2.2.2 The Regional and Platform Preferences

The valid questionnaires show that among the 62 respondents, 38 watched the stars' reality shows of mainland China the most, accounting for 61.3% of the total respondents, 8 people chose to watch that of Hong Kong and Taiwan, 7 chose that of Japan and South Korea, and 2 chose that of Europe; but 42 people recognized that foreign stars' reality shows were better than the domestic reality shows, accounting for 67.8%; 57 people held that the current domestic stars' reality shows were crudely made and stereotyped, accounting for nearly 92%; however, 52 people held that the standard of this kind of domestic reality shows was in a general progress, accounting for 84%. The survey finds that college students watch the stars' reality shows of mainland China the most, followed by that of Hong Kong and Taiwan, then that of Japan and South Korea; however, they generally agree that the level of the domestic stars' reality shows is lower than abroad, but the overall level has been improved compared to before.

The valid questionnaires show that among the 62 respondents, 33 believe that Hunan TV's variety shows are better than other televisions, accounting for more than half the respondents; 38 people currently still like to see *Happy Camp* and other old variety shows of Hunan TV, accounting for 62.3%; the variety shows which the correspondents often watch are mostly from Hunan TV, Zhejiang TV and other well-known provincial TV stations. The survey shows that, as an influential TV station, Hunan TV's stars' reality shows are more popular, and a good platform affects audiences' viewing options of stars' reality shows.

### 2.2.3 The Program Production and Packaging Preferences

As a narrative form with people's real shows and no fixed scripts, the essence of reality shows on TV has a narrative feature, and it can be said to be a combination of strong features of script and game. Therefore, program production and packaging are very important.

The 62 valid questionnaires show that 29 people are concerned about chain design and production team, accounting for 47%; 51 people prefer to see heartwarming plots rather than fierce conflicts, accounting for 82%; 36 people usually love to see "Where is the father", accounting for 58%; 52 people show an antipathy to a lot of implanted advertisements, accounting for 84%; 56 people think that the stars' reality shows should deliver a positive energy, accounting for more than 90% of the total respondents.

The survey shows that an elite production team is very important, the chain design should be new and interesting, and a host with a strong sense of variety program will lift the overall performance of the show. With the development of society, people more like to watch heartwarming parenting reality shows, and call for

such programs to transfer a positive energy. As for the implanted advertisements in the shows, the majority of students consider disgusting.

### 2.2.4 The Star Preference

Among the 62 respondents, 22 were most concerned about the star lineup of reality shows, accounting for 35.5%; 41 people said as long as there were their favorite stars they would focus on the show, accounting for 66.6% of the total; 60% respondents expressed their admiration of stars' experiences and life. The investigation shows that the star lineup of reality shows is an important factor affecting the behavior preference of the audiences.

At the same time, looking from the most popular parenting star's reality show *Where Is The Father*, the performance of stars' children is an important force to attract viewers. The star guests' sense of variety program is an important benchmark to judge the program level.

### 2.2.5 The Attention Preference

Among the 62 respondents, 42 expressed that they would pay attention to the stars' reality shows which have been focused by everyone, accounting for 67.8% of the total; more than a quarter of respondents watched the stars' reality shows because "everybody watched it", or "to increase talk topic"; 11 people were most concerned about the popularity and social repercussions of stars' reality shows, accounting for 18%. The survey shows that the social repercussion and popularity of stars' reality shows are the important factors affecting the behavior preference of audiences.

## 2.3 The Analysis of Mobile Internet's Impacts on Stars' Reality Shows

### 2.3.1 Information Access

As Table 3 shows, among the 62 respondents, 55 acquire the entertainment information of stars' reality shows through mobile phones, tablet PCs and other mobile terminals, accounting for 89%; 7 get entertainment information through other channels, accounting for only 11%. The survey shows that the mobile Internet has become an important platform to publicize stars' reality shows. With the development of mobile Internet, mobile phones, news clients on tablet PCs, video APP, Microblogs and Wechat are believed to at an important position to publicize entertainment information.

**Table 3**  
The Methods of College Students to Obtain the Entertainment Information of Stars' Reality Shows

Method	Number of people	Percentage
Mobile terminal	55	88.71%
Others	7	11.29%
Total	62	100.00%

### 2.3.2 Viewing Device

Among the 62 respondents, 39 normally use mobile phones, tablet PCs and other mobile devices to watch

stars' reality shows on APPs and websites, accounting for 63% of the total. The survey shows that the mobile Internet has become an important way to spread reality shows. As smart phones and tablet computers enter our lives, the movable and portable features make college students more willing to watch stars' reality shows in the fragmented time and through these new media.

**Table 4**  
**The Devices of College Students to Watch Stars' Reality Shows**

Device	Number of people	Percentage
Mobile terminal	39	62.90%
Others	23	37.10%
Total	62	100.00%

### 2.3.3 Participation and Interaction

Among the 62 respondents, 32 are often concerned about or even participate in the topics and discussions about stars' reality shows on the Microblog, Wechat or other new media, accounting for more than half of the respondents. The survey shows that the mobile Internet has become an important form for audiences to feedback, participate and interact with stars' reality shows, and the discussions and interactions on micro-blog and Wechat, in turn, improve the popularity and influences of the stars' reality shows.

**Table 5**  
**The Methods of College Students to Participate in Stars' Reality Shows**

Method	Number of people	Percentage
Mobile terminal	32	51.61%
Others	30	48.39%
Total	62	100.00%

## 2.4 The Analysis on the Role of Stars' Reality Shows

### 2.4.1 Recreation

Among the 62 respondents, 47 believed that watching a stars' reality show was for entertainment, accounting for 76% of the total people; 7% of the respondents thought that this was an effective way to enliven life. The survey shows that the role of stars' reality shows is mainly reflected in its entertainment.

### 2.4.2 Access to Information

42 respondents said they would pay attention to the stars' reality shows which everyone was concerned about, accounting for 67.8% of the total people; 23 respondents watched reality shows in order to "access to information" and "increase talk topic", accounting for 31%; 11 people were most concerned about the popularity and social repercussions of the reality shows, accounting for about 1/5 of the total respondents. The survey shows that the role of stars' reality shows is also reflected in its social nature.

### 2.4.3 Value Orientation

24 respondents believed that the storyline of stars' reality shows were not close to the lives of the general public, not down to earth, accounting for 38.8%; 60% of the respondents said that after seeing the reality shows they admired the stars' lives; 56 people called for stars' reality shows to deliver a positive energy, accounting for more than 90% of the total. These indicate that as a cultural product, stars' reality shows have a value-oriented role.

## CONCLUSION

(a) The main group to watch stars' reality shows is female students.

The survey shows that the female students of our university are more concerned about stars' reality shows. The good-looking and fancy scenes, seductive stars, fashionable apparels, makeup and other elements are likely to attract their attention. Additionally, a lot of female students are interested in entertainment gossips and are very emotional, the stars in the programs are most famous and cool, which will increase their attention to the programs. Male students are generally rational, willing to spend more time in games and sports, but less time in variety programs.

The respondents lay more emphasis on the star lineup and chain design of the programs. Through the analysis of questionnaires, we find that most of the students watch a reality show star in order to see their favorite stars, or because the program is designed to be new and interesting.

(b) The vigorous publicity of new media expands the influences of star's reality shows.

The survey shows that college students primarily use phones, tablet PCs, Internet and other new media to watch stars' reality shows. With the rapid development of network technology, smart phones, tablet PCs have entered the lives of college students. The mobility, convenience and developed network allow college students to take advantage of the fragmented time to watch reality shows. Meanwhile, on one hand, the publicity team behind a series of programs of the stars' reality shows use the micro-blog, Wechat and other online media to publicize vigorously, make all kinds of gimmicks, make enough potentials for the programs to enhance their influences, so that people who do not watch the programs are aware of the existence of the programs. The advent of the era of mass media helps launch stars' reality shows as a cultural product in the major media. For example, "Where is the father" does not only have a TV reality show, but also has a film, and even introduces a game; at the same time it triggers extensive discussions on the Microblog and Wechat. On the other hand, under the influences of online media, reality shows put an increasing focus on strengthening the participation of audiences. There are specialized people in the micro-blog



and Wechat to interact with audiences, try to understand the audiences' feedback on the programs, so as to provide evidences to improve the level of programming, which also potentially increases the popularity and influences of stars' reality shows.

(c) College students mainly take stars' reality shows as an entertainment and a way to increase talk topic.

The survey shows that most college students take stars' reality shows as a leisure, and entertainment is the main function of them. In the shows, the parts with constant jokes and different kinds of funny actions of the stars add some humor for college students. Meanwhile, when watching the shows, one can learn the latest and most interesting information in the entertainment circle, so as to increase the "talk topic" in conversation with friends so as to strengthen interpersonal relationships. The interesting plots in the latest hot shows often become a laugh source for students to tease each other, and if one does not watch the shows, he may encounter obstacles in communicating with people.

(d) The problem of value orientation in stars' reality shows.

Most people are calling for that stars' reality shows should transfer a positive energy, which indicates that, at present, many stars' reality shows have a problem of value orientation. The survey finds that the story in some reality shows is not down to earth, and is far away from the public life. The public can only envy their life from far away and resentment that the society is dominated by money. Meanwhile, a lot of advertisement are also implanted in the shows, so that the public cannot help wonder: is it an entertainment program or an advertisement? It also finds that the majority of domestic reality shows have borrowed the styles and production experience of related foreign programs, or even spent a lot of money to buy the copyrights, then copy the entire production links into the domestic without any innovation. Some media see that a show is booming and all go imitate, so the trend gradually becomes unifying without a novelty, and values tend to be the same.

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## RECOMMENDATIONS

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(a) Change the publicity approach to attract male audiences.

Currently, many female students have a lot of understandings about stars' reality shows, and become the potential audiences. All major programs have almost the same audience market. In order to win more domestic market, we must switch attention to male students. We can obtain understanding of male students through questionnaires and gender analysis, and "apply medicine according to indications", so as to attract more potential market.

(b) The major programs should make full use of new media.

The rapid development and popularization of network technology allow people to use the network at any time to get the latest entertainment trends, so the major programs should take advantage of these resources, such as the Wechat, Microblog to strengthen the interactions with audiences, and understand the preferences of a wide range of audiences, so as to launch the corresponding programs based on public preferences.

(c) Stars' reality shows should establish a correct value orientation.

Today, there are various cultures flood around us in the society, and many of them are crudely made and vulgar cultural products. They can only occupy the market in the short-term. In order to obtain a long-term development, we must establish our own cultural images in line with the audiences' spiritual and cultural needs, and give a value orientation and positive impact on them. Only in this way, the programs can grow healthily.

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